

BB027

12/17/77

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

December 17, 1977

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Richard Feinberg, State Department,  
Policy Planning Staff  
Captains Joaquin Gomez and Enrique Montemayor, Argentine Navy

Date: December 17, 1977  
Time: 4:00 p.m.  
Place: Dupont Plaza Hotel, Washington, D.C.

The Captains discussed at length the "Fourth Man" question, arguing that a President who could give direction and unity to government was necessary. Discussions were currently being held in Buenos Aires on this important subject, they said, but warned that General Videla probably preferred to maintain the status quo--and his own dual status as leader of the junta and head of the Army--until his term of three years expired. The Captains pictured Videla as unable to lead, and warned that the resulting power vacuum could degenerate into "caudillismo," and referred explicitly to Generals Menendez and Suarez Mason.

The Captains reported that Admiral Massera, whom they serve, had proposed in the junta that a list of political prisoners be released and that the junta had agreed--but that regional Army commanders had refused. This demonstrated Videla's inability to impose his will. When asked about the recent disappearances of relatives of "disappeared," they opined that many were actually members of a Marxist-Leninist Trotskyite movement.

The Captains recognized that Argentina had never been very pro-US, but suggested that improved relations were possible, and implied that Massera would seek such improvement.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

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Exemption(s):

Declassify: ( ) In Part ( ) In Full

( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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When asked whether they felt that subversion had been practically defeated, they responded that while the active terrorists had been dealt harsh blows, the general environment that had given rise to subversion had yet to be corrected. They professed their belief in democracy, but warned that the proper restructuring of Argentine society was required before the Armed Forces could return to the barracks. No date could be put on the eventual "retorno."

When asked about the pending labor legislation, they replied that the unions were to be de-politicized, although everyone must recognize that the unions would inevitably have some role to play in politics.

Drafted: S/P: RFeinberg<sup>EF</sup>:rym  
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